



**STATE OF ARKANSAS
ASA HUTCHINSON, GOVERNOR**

Arkansas Women's Commission
Chair: Alison Williams, Chief of Staff to the Governor
Meeting #6 Pine Bluff, Pine Bluff Public Library
July 15, 2022

Attendees In Person: Mellie Bridwell, Tamika Edwards, Breanne Davis, Marie Holder, Kathy White Loyd, Beverly Morrow, Apprilla Porch, Dr. Verónikha Salazar, Maddie Spickard, Naija White

Virtual Attendees: Alison, Williams, Dr. Todd Shields, Kathy Webb, Senator Joyce Elliott, Senator Breanne Davis, Dr. Kathy White Loyd

Absent: Gayatri Agnew, Dr. Cherisse Jones-Branch, Dr. Charisse Childers, Heather Larkin

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

- The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.
- The Chair opened the meeting by sending her regrets for not being in person.
- The Chair thanked Ms. Mildred Franco and noted her long history of supporting entrepreneurs in Arkansas.
- The Chair thanked Mr. Ricky Williams, Director of the Pine Bluff Public Library.
- The Chair reminded guests and visitors that the meeting is open to the public and is accessible via live stream on YouTube, and it will be archived on our website later.
- Ms. Mildred Franco thanked everyone for coming. Ms. Franco asked that everyone be authentic and to share their experiences and their barriers and the things that they would like to see going forward.
 - Ms. Franco thanked Alison for the opportunity to host the meeting and Mr. Ricky Williams for allowing the library to be used.
 - Ms. Franco also thanked Jeremy for his technical support.
- The Chair noted that Dr. Cherisse Jones-Branch was unable to join the meeting because of an unanticipated obligation.
- The Chair noted the passing of Mr. Joe Oliver Larkin Commissioner, Heather Larkin's father.

- The Chair also wanted to celebrate Dr. Todd Shields as the new Chancellor of Arkansas State University.
- Draft minutes of our last meeting were forwarded to the Commissioners for review. The Chair entertained a motion to adopt the minutes from the June 16th meeting.
 - Senator Joyce Elliott made the motion.
 - Kathy Webb seconded the motion.
 - Without objection, the June 16th meeting minutes were adopted.
 - The Chair asked if there was old business that needed to be discussed.
- REPORTS
- The Chair asked for representatives from the subcommittees to share their reports
 - Research and Writing – Dr. Shields
 - Draft of the state survey that will be sent to Maddie Spickard of the Women’s Foundation of Arkansas for review.
 - Will be sending the survey out to the whole commission to start looking at.
 - Organized the questions based upon the Governor’s mandates.
 - Looked through other Women’s Commissions surveys to see if the questions can overlap.
 - Reminded the other subcommittee that if they would like to add something to the survey, that should be sent by August 1st. Will be building the survey in late August and early September.
 - Committee met with Robert McGough and the team at the Department of Information Systems. They have identified three questions that they think their data will be able to help us with the most. It revolves around women’s participation, placement of women in the workforce, and through education completion. The historical data indicates the past successes for women and how to build on labor force participation.
 - They have an aggressive schedule and think they will have that data to us by August.
 - Depending on changes they will have an interactive web page up for us by October.
 - Adding charts to the previous report and are halfway through the maps.
 - In a couple of weeks will have the maps sent to everyone for review and feedback.
 - The Chair reminded everyone that the deadline for getting questions for potential inclusion in the survey is August 1st.
 - Barriers to Entry and Retention – Dr. White Loyd
 - Zoom meeting to finalize questions to submit.
 - Consolidating individual reports that have been written to submit for reviews.
 - Impacts of Covid-19 – Mellie Bridewell
 - Peeling back layers of Covid-19 and how it affected everything
 - Spoke with the Executive Director for the Arkansas Women and Children First about Domestic Violence.
 - Done with speakers next meeting will be about identifying questions. They have a lot of information coming towards them.
 - Family Caregiving – No Report Given.

- The next commission meeting will be in Russellville for August 18th.
 - The chair thanked Senator Davis for volunteering to host that meeting.
- The Chair is still seeking recommendations on how to engage our military community.

3. NEW BUSINESS

- The Chair then invited Ms. Mimi San Pedro of the Venture Center to present to the commission and the guests.
 - Women have special needs, needs that only other women understand.
 - Cultural differences
 - Family
 - Professionalism Issues
 - Moving up in the Corporate World
 - Accessing Capital
 - Wrote mentor and mentee guides so that participants can get the most out of the program.
 - Criteria for screening applications
 - Location (wanting all areas of the state included)
 - Diversity
 - Skills of mentors and mentees
 - Would like more regions of the state covered.
 - Lots of participation from central Arkansas and Northwest Arkansas. Some participation in Northeast Arkansas. Not enough participation in the Delta region.
 - Callout to the Commission and those in the room to help get more applications in those areas.
 - Had an orientation with a checklist.
 - The three things that the program wants to focus on are:
 - Mentorship
 - Networking
 - Access to Capital
 - The program has an app with a score card so that every meaningful interaction between the Mentee and the Mentor can be tracked. In the app their meetings and goals are tracked and scored. At the end of the year the highest scoring mentee will receive \$10,000. Second place receives \$7500, and third place receives \$5000.
 - Quarterly Meetings are held, and specialists are brought in for education. Surveys are conducted within the program. The top three things that are requested are:
 - Training in sales
 - Training in marketing
 - Training in finances
 - ✓ A lot of the women in the program do not know how to read a financial statement.
 - ✓ They do not understand profitability.
 - ✚ Their pricing is reviewed to make sure they are pricing their services correctly.

- The application process starts in August.
- Need more mentors.
- Those that are not accepted in the program with a one-on-one mentor are still brought into the group mentorship program.
- Callout for Mentors.
- Senator Elliott asked what the barrier might be to getting more participation in areas where the program is not represented on a larger scale.
 - Would like to find representatives in those areas to get the word out.
 - They engage in a lot of social media.
 - They have been on a lot of interviews. Channel 11 ran a story on the program every week in the month of May promoting the program for Mother's Day.
 - Arkansas Business has covered the program.
 - Information is sent to different chambers of commerce.
 - What works is if there is a representative in those areas that can help get the word out.
 - Senator Elliott stated that some of the issues may be related to broadband, she will be reaching out to Ms. San Pedro.
- Commissioner Bridewell wondered if there was a mentorship for people who wanted to start a non-profit?
 - Ms. San Pedro said that there was a non-profit mentorship.
 - Commissioner Bridewell stated that she was in the Arkansas Delta, and she wanted to volunteer to be a mentor.
- The Chair asked when applications were accepted so that the Commission can assist with distributing information.
 - Ms. San Pedro stated that they gather email year-round. The end of August the first of September the application process will open. As soon as the application process is open, they will be sending out to their contacts to start getting the word out.
- Qualifications
 - Mentors do not have to be entrepreneurs, but it does help if they were at sometime in their life. Looking at skill sets, and they start matching that way.
- Chair turned the meeting over to Tamika Edwards to facilitate the focus group portion of the meeting.
 - Focus Group Callouts
 - Business/Finance
 - Lack of Mentorship
 - Knowledge
 - Relationships/Connections
 - Open and willing people to say yes instead of no to helping with capital and other opportunities
 - Paperwork related to starting a business, obtaining capital.

- Childcare
 - Amount
 - Quality
 - Industrial Jobs 3rd shift childcare issues.
 - Support for childcare in homes
 - ✓ Cost prohibitive
 - ✓ Insurance
 - ✓ Wages
 - ✓ Extended Hours
 - ✓ Workplace Childcare
 - ✓ Afterschool programs that don't end at 6:00 pm.
 - Business Etiquette
 - ✓ Employees don't know how to interact with business or the stakeholders.
 - Access to training
 - ✓ Accounting
 - ✓ Quick Books
 - ✓ Business Plan
 - ✓ Localize and personal assistance county by county.
 - Broadband
 - ✓ Upload Speed
 - ✓ Expensive
 - Resource for Businesses within the community.
 - Overhaul of school curriculum so that "life skills" can be taught.
 - ✓ Skills for individuals that do not want to go to college but need a skill to support themselves and their families.
 - ✓ How to fill out an application.
 - Training for startup business
 - ✓ Local and state policies
 - ✓ Partnering with people who are in the business that you want to be in.
 - Localize resources county by county so that entrepreneurs in specific counties know who to reach out to, and what programs are available in the county and what worked for them.
 - Competition between non-profits for funding.
- The Chair thanked the host and the special guests.
- The Chair adjourned the meeting at 2:32 pm.